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Small-Scale Agriculture Today

Office for Small-Scale Agriculture



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U.S. Department of Agriculture - Cooperative State Research Service - Agricultural Research For A Better Tomorrow

AT ISSUE...WILDLIFE--SMALL GAME

The bobwhite quail, with its wide geographic distribution, cheerful early summer call, allure to bird hunting enthusiasts, excellent culinary qualities, and habit of feeding on farm insects and weed pests, is one of the best known and loved farmland wildlife species. Unfortunately, this bird, along with a host of other bird species once common on the farm (e.g., meadowlark, shrike, prairie warbler, etc.), has undergone dramatic population declines during the past 20 or 30 years.

The days of the small, self-sufficient farm marked the high point in quail populations. As an example, railroad freight records document that during the winter of 1910 some 12,087 quail were shipped from one station in the piedmont region of North Carolina to northern markets.

Historically, each farm was a complete management unit not only for farmers and their families, but also for small game, e.g., the bobwhite quail. Cash crop fields were bordered by abandoned and active hog lots and livestock pastures, grain fields for livestock feed, and gardens to feed the farm family. Woodlots were often burned to produce better grazing for livestock. Forests were diverse, in every stage from fresh cut to mature timber, resulting from the never ending job of cutting wood for heat, cooking, and curing of farm products. Each farm maintained a flock of free-ranging poultry. To protect this important food source farmers worked year-round to control hawks, owls, and predatory mammals. These diverse, self-sufficient operations supported the farm family and purely by accident provided food, cover, and protection for a flourishing population of bobwhites.

Of course, farms today are drastically different from those early farms. Today's farmer is a prominent member of an economic system that is based not on self-sufficiency and a local economy, but on worldwide markets. Most farmers certainly can't be convinced to sell their tractors and spray rigs and revert to farming with a mule and hoe just to enjoy having quail on their property. However, often minor changes in farm operations result in higher quail populations without disrupting farming activities.

The biggest challenge for landowners who want to both maintain an efficient farming operation and have abundant wildlife populations is to create the required diversity of plant types. Quail populations are highest where a year round food supply and abundant escape cover are nearby.

Opportunities for improving cover conditions exist on ditchbanks and field edges. Allowing cover to remain on ditchbanks and field edges during the winter months permits bobwhites to find protection close to the waste grains and weed seeds on which they feed.

Landowners often destroy excellent quail cover around field edges or old fields simply to maintain a neat, prosperous appearance. With some imagination many landowners could cut back drastically on mowing, while saving time and money and maintaining a neat appearance, without sacrificing production.

Farmers are learning good things about native warm season grasses (switchgrass, big bluestem, and Indiangrass). These perennial grasses fill an important gap in that they provide high-quality grazing during the hot summer months when fescue is poor forage. They are better for quail because they provide overhead protection, high insect populations, and access at ground level.

Additional information and technical assistance for landowners who wish to learn more about increasing quail populations is available from State wildlife agencies, the USDA Soil Conservation Service, and the USDA Extension Service. (Comments of Terry Sharpe, Small Game Project Leader, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, September 1991)

TOPICS AND TECHNOLOGY

Thanks - From a reader of this newsletter ... "Your newsletters are great! The eclectic mix of events, helpful information, and news is kind of like an intellectual fertilizer that informs and inspires and is thoroughly practical."

Birds - "Raising Quail, Pheasants, Partridge, Bobwhites and Ostriches" J. Larson, 21 pages, April 1991, is available free from the USDA National Agricultural Library if you send a self-addressed, gummed label along with your name and the publication number, QB 91-72. Contact: Jane Gates, Alternative Farming Systems Information Center, NAL, Room 111, 10301 Baltimore Boulevard, Beltsville, MD 20705-2351; telephone 301-344-3559.

Pesticides and Wildlife - If copies are not available at Extension and Soil Conservation Service offices in your area, write for the publication "Agricultural Pesticides and Wildlife: A Balancing Act," a guide for reducing the wildlife impacts of pesticide use. Contact: Jim Pease, Extension Wildlife Specialist, Department of Animal Ecology, 103 Science II, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011; telephone 515-294-7429.

Field Trials - They date back to England in 1866. "American Field" is a national weekly for and about field trialers and their champion dogs. For more information, contact: Bernard Matthys, American Field Publishing Co., 542 South Dearborn, Chicago, IL 60605-1528; telephone 312-663-9797.

New Grass Varieties - Hot, dry climates don't bother Dacotah switchgrass, Bison big bluestem or Tomahawk Indiangrass. These 3 to 5-foot-tall bushy plants provide summer grazing for livestock in the Northern Plains and also offer camouflage, nesting materials, and seeds to birds and other wildlife. Contact: Reed E. Barker, USDA-ARS, National Forage Seed Production Research Center, 3450 SW Campus Way, Corvallis, OR 97331; telephone 503-757-4728.

Alarming - A 1990 survey of hunters in Delaware reported the number of quail and rabbits harvested has declined 50 percent in the last 15 years. "As acres of Delaware farmland give way to housing developments and other land use pressures, several wildlife species are losing their homes. The time for action is at hand...Greg Moore." (The Delmarva Farmer, June 26, 1990, p. 19)

Wildlife Help - By starting a woodland management program you improve the forest and wildlife and can benefit financially as well. Through select cutting and planting you can create ideal conditions for wildlife, which can in turn improve fee hunting and fishing income.

TIP - To ripen tomatoes from your garden, store them at 65 - 70°F. At 65°F, they will ripen slowly, while at below 50°F, they will rot without ripening. Placing the tomatoes in a perforated plastic bag at a humidity near 90 percent hastens ripening.

Fall Chores - Transplant deciduous trees and shrubs when they are dormant; after their leaves have fallen off. However, conifer evergreen trees or shrubs may be transplanted earlier in the fall. Most important, be sure to transplant when the ground is workable and not frozen.

Cardinal Rules - If you need information on bird feeding, obtain a copy of "Backyard Bird Feeding." Contact: Litasha Simmons, U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, 1849 C Street N.W., Washington, DC 20240; telephone 703-358-1711.

Bamboo - Want more information on how to control it, manufactured items, erosion control, etc? Contact: Daphne Lewis, Bamboo Gardens of Washington, Redmond, WA 98053-4602; telephone 206-868-5166.

New Newsletter - The first newsletter of the Organic Grapes into Wine Alliance appeared in June 1991. Copies of the OGWA organic wine standards are available for \$10. For more information on wines made from organically grown grapes or on OGWA, contact: Veronique Raskin, OGWA, 54 Genoa Place, San Francisco, CA 94133; telephone 1-800-477-0167.

Pesticide Debate - "Agriculture Department officials report an 800 telephone number (1-800-262-0216) is up and running to provide updated information on registration of minor-use chemicals." -- Mark Powell (The Delmarva Farmer, April 30, 1991, p. 18)

Free Catalog - The U.S. Government Printing Office has a free catalog of new and popular books sold by the Government. Write: Free Catalog, P.O. Box 37000, Washington, DC 20013-7000.

Caution - The offer for sales of endangered wildlife species is contingent upon conditions set forth in the Endangered Species Act and the acquisition of proper permits from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and States and local agencies. If you have questions regarding transactions, contact: Federal Wildlife Permit Office, 1000 North Glebe Road, Room 611, Arlington, VA 22201; telephone 202-343-4955.

Communication - Fibernet is a computer bulletin board that gives producers and marketers from different sections of the industry a direct means of access. For more information send self addressed stamped envelope to: Ron Parker, Fibernet, Route 1, Box 153, Henning, MN 56551-8740; telephone 218-583-2419.

FREE - Catalog of over 800 manuals, teachers guides, slide sets, and videos covering all aspects of agri-science instructional materials. Contact: Daryle Foster, Instructional Materials Service, 109 Kennedy Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853; telephone 607-255-9252.

Part-time Farming - One of the Quick Bibliography Series of the National Agricultural Library (NAL), QB 90-75 lists 147 citations, January 1979 - March 1990. For your free copy, list the title and series number and send self-addressed gummed label to: USDA-NAL, Public Services Division, Room 111, Beltsville, MD 20705.

An Interest - "The Grange is one of the few fraternal organizations that has accepted women members and leaders since its beginnings in the 1800's. It also offers social and

educational opportunities, and a chance to develop leadership skills. You don't have to be a farmer to belong to Granges; all you have to do is have an interest in agriculture. And anybody who likes to eat has an interest in agriculture." -- Russell Stauffer (Chicago Tribune, April 29, 1991, p. 3)

Sheep's Milk - "Americans are no strangers to products made from ewe's milk; last year, we ate 45 million pounds of imported Pecorino and 1 million pounds of Roquefort as well as unknown quantities of other imported -- and usually high-priced -- sheep's milk cheeses, such as Feta and Kasseri." Will and can the fledgling domestic dairy sheep industry expand? Contact: William J. Boylan, Animal Science Dept., Room 133 Peters Hall, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN 55108; telephone 612-624-1727.

Something New - A new, natural biosoap kills sweet potato whitefly nymphs -- a pest that devastates vegetable, cotton, and ornamental crops worldwide. Contact: John W. Neal, USDA-ARS, Florist and Nursery Crops Laboratory, Building 470 BARC-E, Beltsville, MD 20705-2350; telephone 301-344-4559.

Trivia - Most experts agree that it takes 35 healthy green leaves to produce a peach of good size and quality.

1-800 - Need impartial information about pesticides? Help is just a toll-free call away. Contact the National Pesticide Telecommunications Network anytime; telephone 1-800-858-7378.

Safety Question? - From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekdays USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline staffers will answer your questions on safe handling and storing of meat, poultry, and other perishable products. Telephone 1-800-535-4555; Washington, DC area residents should call 202-447-3333.

Mirliton - Another name is cheyote. This white or green pear-shaped relative of the cucumber is popular in southern backyard gardens and is a potential commercial crop. Contact: Owusu Bandele, Center for Small Farm Research, Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, Baton Rouge, LA 70813; telephone 504-771-2262.

Beef or Veal - More specifically, "Special-Fed Veal Production Guide" and "Holstein Beef Production" are now available for \$20 each. Contact: Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service (NRASE), 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Cooperative Extension, Ithaca, NY 14853; telephone 607-255-7654.

Nursery Business - In terms of grower receipts, U.S. domestic sales of landscaping products, cut flowers, and bedding plants amounted to about \$7 billion in 1989.

NOFA Videos - National Organic Farmers Association has 50 organic subjects on VHS for rental or purchase. For a free brochure listing, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to NOFA Videos, RFD #2, Barre, MA 01005.

THE VALUE OF WILDLIFE

Sharing our living areas with wildlife can have many values:

- **AESTHETIC** - most of us thrill to hear the sound of a wood thrush's song in the summertime;
- **BIOLOGICAL** - birds, toads, and frogs can be some of our best friends around a garden since they often consume insect pests;
- **EDUCATIONAL** - our children gain a valuable education by observing the natural world around them;
- **ECONOMIC** - much of the landscaping we do to benefit wildlife may actually increase property values; and
- **RECREATION** - birdwatching and nature photography are recreational pursuits enjoyed by many of us.

SAFE SHOOTING

- Control the direction of your firearm safely, keeping the safety on until ready to shoot. Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
- Identify your target and what is beyond it. Know the identifying features of the game you hunt.
- Treat every firearm with the same respect due a loaded firearm.
- Be sure the barrel and action are clear of obstructions and that you have only ammunition of the proper size for the firearm you are carrying.
- Unload firearms when not in use. Leave the actions open. Firearms should be carried empty in cases to and from shooting areas.
- Never point a firearm at anything you do not want to shoot. Avoid all horseplay with a firearm.
- Never climb a fence or tree, or jump a ditch or log with a loaded firearm. Never pull a firearm toward you by the muzzle.
- Never shoot a bullet at a flat, hard surface or water. During target practice, be sure your backstop is adequate.
- Store firearms and ammunition separately, beyond the reach of children and careless adults.
- Avoid alcoholic beverages or mood altering prescription drugs before or while shooting.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 19-20, 1991 - Missouri Small Farmers Gathering, Wood's Farm, Holden, MO. Contact: Kenneth Elkins, telephone 816-732-4865 or Jim Counts, 816-747-8929.

November 1-4, 1991 - 4th National Conference Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers, Inc., Cleveland Airport Marriott, Cleveland, OH. Contact: Judy Laushman, ASCFG, 155 Elm Street, Oberlin, OH 44074; telephone 216-774-2887.

November 5-8, 1991 - Regional Small Farm Conference and Trade Show, Leon County Civic Center, Tallahassee, FL. Contact: Lawrence Carter, FAMU Cooperative Extension Program, 215 Perry-Paige Building, Tallahassee, FL 32307; telephone 904-599-3546.

November 7-8, 1991 - Seventh Annual 1991 Intensive Grazing Conference, Holiday Inn North, Jackson, MS. Contact: Louise Shivers, P.O. Box 9607, Jackson, MS 39286; telephone 601-981-4805.

November 15-16, 1991 - Rural Ventures Conference, Teulon Centennial Hall, Teulon, Manitoba, Canada. Contact: Jim Mason, Agriculture Farm and Rural Development Interlake Region, P.O. Box 40, Lundar, Manitoba, Canada R0C 1YO; telephone 204-762-5649.

November 21-22, 1991 - Conference on Innovative Policies for Agricultural Research, Tufts University, Medford, MA. Contact: William Lockeretz, School of Nutrition, Tufts University, Medford, MA 02155; telephone 617-391-1033.

December 3-4, 1991 - "Thrive Not Just Survive: Rural and Agricultural Profit Opportunities in the Nineties," Holiday Inn - Madison Southeast, Madison, WI. Contact: Pam Raschein; Dept. of Agriculture, P.O. Box 8911, Madison, WI 53708; telephone 608-266-9588.

January 8-12, 1992 - A "Piggy-backed" Conference involving 4 berry and fruit associations, Northwest Inn (Brooklyn Park), Minneapolis, MN. Contact: Paul Otten, 2124 University Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55114-1820; telephone 612-659-2515.

Send topics, technologies, and calendar of events (yours) to the Office for Small-Scale Agriculture (OSSA); telephone 202-401-4640. H. Kerr or Fax 202-401-5179.

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